



# Report of the National School Shield Task Force

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# BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

What more can we do as a nation to improve the safety of our children at school? This was the question raised by the National Rifle Association (NRA) after the Sandy Hook tragedy in which twenty young lives were taken along with the lives of six devoted school staff.<sup>1</sup>

The posing of this question led to the assembly of a team of recognized experts in homeland security, law-enforcement training and school safety to conduct a survey of selected schools and their current security standards. This review has been conducted without any preconceived conclusions or mandate from the NRA except to determine what is needed to save young lives. The NRA has fully honored its commitment to respect the independence of this task force and to fund its work.

There are many experts in school safety. Some are self-proclaimed experts and others are nationally recognized leaders and innovators. The group of experts assembled for the National School Shield (NSS) Task Force is a selection of the most experienced and respected security experts; however, it is recognized that there are many others who have written, worked and contributed in the arena of school safety. While our report studied and reviewed the work of many in the field, our purpose was to bring together experts with different security backgrounds to provide a fresh perspective to the challenge of school violence. It is our hope that as the NSS continues into the future, the contribution and support for this initiative by school safety experts will expand.

Members of the task force include:

Ralph Basham, *Former Director of U.S. Secret Service, Former Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Former Director of Federal Law Enforcement Training Center*

Col. (ret.) John Quattrone, *U.S. Air Force Security Forces Officer, three-time Commander, Former Joint Staff Operations Antiterrorism/Homeland Defense Directorate, the Pentagon*

Tony Lambraia, *CEO of Phoenix RBT Solutions*

Bruce Bowen, *Former Deputy Director of U.S. Secret Service, Former Assistant Director of Federal Law Enforcement Training Center*

Thomas Dinanno, *Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Critical Infrastructure Protection, U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

Robert Lambraia, *Director of Training of Phoenix RBT Solutions*

Joe Overstreet, *Former U.S. Secret Service Special Agent, Law Enforcement Training Manager of Phoenix RBT Solutions*

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Barron, *Nation Reels After Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Dec. 14, 2012, at A1, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/15/nyregion/sandy-hook-principal-and-school-psychologist-went-the-extra-mile.html?ref=nyregion>. See also Conn. Victims: Lively youngsters, devoted adults, ABC Local News (Dec. 17, 2012), [http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/national\\_world&id=8918308](http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/national_world&id=8918308).

Mike Restovich, *Former Chief Homeland Security Attache of U.S. Embassy in London, Former Assistant Administrator of U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Former Supervisor, U.S. Secret Service*  
Randy Knapp, *Instructor, RBT Solutions*  
Joseph Turitto, *Retired Police Sergeant*  
Wence Arevalo, *Police SWAT/Entry Team Leader Sergeant*  
Kirt Rothe, *Instructor, Phoenix RBT Solutions*

In addition to the experience of the task force members, the following is a partial list of officials, schools and organizations that have made important contributions to this report by providing access to schools or by sharing their expertise and perspective.

Los Angeles Unified School District  
National Association of School Resource Officers  
Dr. Park Dietz, *President, Threat Assessment Group, Newport Beach, CA*  
Dr. Rosa Blackwell, *former Superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools*  
Augustine Pescatore, *President of National Association of School Security Officers, Commander, Office for School Safety, Philadelphia School District*  
National Association of Pupil Transportation, Albany, NY  
Michael Dorn, *Executive Director, Safe Havens International, Inc.*

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF ASSESSED SCHOOLS

For security and confidentiality reasons, the exact names of the participating schools have been kept confidential. A general description of the assessed schools is being released to show the variety of schools surveyed by the assessment teams.

1. Midwestern area public school, rural, pre-K through 12, 1,000 students, no SRO on campus, planning on arming school staff
2. Mid-Atlantic area public school, suburban, K through 5, 652 students, no SRO on campus. Part-time visits by district SRO
3. Southeastern area public school, suburban, 6 through 8, 1,125 students, no SRO on campus; however, one full-time unarmed security representative is present. Part-time visits by district SRO
4. Southeastern area public school, suburban, 9 through 12, 2,837 students, full-time SRO (armed), full-time security staff member, plus staff of three, all armed
5. Southwestern area parochial private school, urban, pre-K through 8, 218 students, no SRO on campus
6. Southwestern area public school, urban, pre-K through 8, 939 students, no SRO on campus

In addition to the above schools, which underwent a comprehensive security assessment, the National School Shield Task Force interviewed scores of school

representatives, teachers, parents and law-enforcement officials. The experts who comprise the NSS Task Force have conducted hundreds of facility assessments, including specific evaluations of school security programs. The combined experience along with the specific assessments conducted in performance of the NSS mandate have led to the conclusions and recommendations set forth in this report.

## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

The evaluations of the security and emergency preparedness of each school consisted of a pre-assessment questionnaire presented to the principal, along with an examination of the floor plans and school design. The actual assessment, which was conducted over the course of two to four days, included:

- In-briefing with principal or superintendent
- Reviewing school's design, security/safety policies, emergency plans and procedures
- Observing day-to-day operations
- Conducting interviews with school principal, staff, security, teachers, crisis response team members, building engineers and others as necessary
- Determining potential threat(s) to location (risk analysis)
- Photographing and documenting observations

Finally, the principal was briefed at the conclusion of the assessment and provided the findings on vulnerabilities and recommendations of best practices to better secure the school.

The findings and recommendations contained in this report reflect, in part, the insights gained from these assessments. Appendix B is a summary of the common vulnerabilities and best practices observed during the course of the school assessments.

# SCHOOL VIOLENCE - A NATIONAL CALL FOR ACTION

On March 5, 2001, Charles Williams, a freshman at Santana High School in Santee, CA, used a .22-caliber revolver to shoot fifteen people at his school, killing two students and wounding thirteen others.<sup>2</sup> Two of the wounded included a student teacher and an unarmed campus security supervisor.<sup>3</sup> They were both shot when they attempted to stop Williams as he was reloading. The two off-duty police officers visiting the school at this time were on opposite ends of the building, but rushed to the scene of the crime and immediately called for backup. When the sheriff's deputies entered the bathroom, Williams was reloading his gun for the fourth time. As soon as he saw the officers, the young freshman that had just shot fifteen people quietly put down his gun and calmly surrendered.<sup>4</sup>

Jeff Weise killed five fellow students, a teacher and a security officer at Red Lake High School in Minnesota on March 21, 2005.<sup>5</sup> Early that morning, Weise killed his grandfather and his grandfather's girlfriend using a .22-caliber gun. Upon entering school that day, Weise was confronted by 28-year-old Derrick Brun, an unarmed guard. Weise murdered Brun before continuing into the school. He killed a total of nine people and wounded seven before taking his own life.

As the above examples demonstrate, the presence of a security guard or off-duty policeman when there is an active shooter is mostly ineffective unless the security officer is armed. Without a weapon to defend them, even the most heroic individuals are unprepared to defend against violent attackers armed with guns.

Contrast those cases with the 1997 shooting at Pearl High School. In that instance, Luke Woodham killed two students and wounded seven others at his high school before the school's assistant principal, Joel Myrick, disarmed him using a .45-caliber semi-automatic pistol that he retrieved from his truck.<sup>6</sup>

Now let's go back to the shooting at Santana High School in 2001. After that attack the officials in the Grossmont Union High School District, which includes both Santana High School as well as near by Granite Hills High School, decided to post armed officers at every school.<sup>7</sup> Less than three weeks after the Santana High School incident, Jason Hoffman, a student at Granite Hills High School, opened fire outside the administrative offices. Hoffman was able to fire about eight rounds before being taken

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<sup>2</sup> Jessica Reaves, *Charles 'Andy' Williams*, TIME (Mar. 9, 2001), <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,101847,00.html>.

<sup>3</sup> EXCLUSIVE: *Santana School Shooter*, ABC News (Oct. 10, 2001), <http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/story?id=132072&page=1>.

<sup>4</sup> Reaves, *supra* note 2.

<sup>5</sup> NBC News, *Teen who killed 9 claimed Nazi leanings* (Mar. 23, 2005), <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/7259823/#.UUjdRVsk5qs>.

<sup>6</sup> *How an Armed Assistant Principal Stopped a School Shooter*, CHICAGO NEWS BENCH (Dec. 17, 2012), <http://rogersparkbench.blogspot.com/2012/12/how-armed-asst-principal-stopped-school.html#.UUjiLlSk5qs>.

<sup>7</sup> John Weldon, *Targeting Schools*, THE NEW AMERICAN (Mar. 1, 2013), <http://www.thenewamerican.com/culture/education/item/14656-targeting-schools>.



down and disarmed by Agent Rich Agundez, the school resource officer (SRO) on duty.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, because of the presence and quick thinking of an armed security guard, Hoffman was prevented from taking the lives of any innocent students.<sup>9</sup>

School violence of this nature has been occurring in the U.S. for almost 300 years. Although there have been changes in the patterns and in the weapons used, mass casualty school assaults continue to have a deeply profound impact on the nation. The first recorded school shooting occurred on July 26, 1764, when four men entered a one-room schoolhouse, killing the schoolmaster and ten children.<sup>10</sup> The most deadly attack on a school occurred in May 1927 in Bath, Michigan, when a trustee from a local school board detonated 600 pounds of dynamite that he had placed inside Bath Consolidated School, before committing suicide by detonating a final explosion in his truck.<sup>11</sup> In the end, Andrew Kehoe had killed 45 people, including 38 elementary school children and his wife, and injured at least 58 more. One of the most notable school murders was the Virginia Tech massacre, when Seung-Hui Cho shot and killed 32 people and wounded 17 in two separate attacks that occurred about two hours apart.<sup>12</sup> This is the deadliest shooting incident by a single gunman in U.S. history.

During the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School, there was a full-time SRO on campus. Although the officer engaged in brief gunfire with the two murderers, which likely saved several lives, the officer remained outside the building caring for a wounded student as the killers proceeded inside.<sup>13</sup> With recent increased attention on the impact of SROs on school safety, and developments in training methods and procedures, armed guards are now able to more effectively protect students. If the situation at Columbine were to repeat itself, a trained SRO would have the skills to directly engage the active shooter and would be aware that neutralizing the threat is the first priority.

This list of atrocities goes on and includes the recent tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT.

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<sup>8</sup> Steven Bartholow, *Santana Shooting in the Press: The New American and NOVA*, SANTEE PATCH (March 5, 2013), [http://santee.patch.com/articles/santana-shooting-video#youtube\\_video-13436413](http://santee.patch.com/articles/santana-shooting-video#youtube_video-13436413). See also *Another School Shooting*, ABC NEWS (March 22, 2001), <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=93750&page=1>.

<sup>9</sup> Mike Nelson, *5 Shot at Granite Hills High School, Ca.*, 26 SAFER SCHOOLS NEWS (March 22, 2011), [http://www.keystosaferschools.com/Granite\\_Hills\\_California\\_Shooting032201.htm](http://www.keystosaferschools.com/Granite_Hills_California_Shooting032201.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Carole Devine, *School shootings are becoming an American dilemma*, HELIUM (Oct. 29, 2009), <http://www.helium.com/items/1632829-school-shootings-in-america>.

<sup>11</sup> Nadia Reiman & Michael Garofalo, *Survivors Recall 1927 Michigan School Massacre*, NPR (April 17, 2009, 4:00PM), <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103186662>; See also Graham Osteen, *The Bath, Michigan, school tragedy of 1927*, THE ITEM (Dec. 16, 2012 6:00AM), [http://www.theitem.com/opinion/graham\\_osteen/the-bath-michigan-school-tragedy-of/article\\_70b2ede8-4744-11e2-bb88-001a4bcf887a.html](http://www.theitem.com/opinion/graham_osteen/the-bath-michigan-school-tragedy-of/article_70b2ede8-4744-11e2-bb88-001a4bcf887a.html).

<sup>12</sup> Shailla Dewan & Johan M. Broder, *Two-Hour Delay Is Linked to Bad Lead*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (April 18, 2007), available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/18/us/18virginia.html?pagewanted=1&ref=chouseunghui>.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Foster, *Columbine Had an Armed Guard*, NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE (Dec. 21, 2012, 2:09PM), <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/336338/columbine-had-armed-guard-daniel-foster>; See also David B. Kopel, *What If We Had Taken Columbine Seriously?*, 5 THE WEEKLY STANDARD 31 (April 24-May 1, 2000), available at <http://www.davekopel.org/2A/Mags/WhatIfWeHadTakenColumbineSeriously.htm>.

# ARMED OFFICERS (SROs), FUNDING HISTORY AND CHALLENGES

School resource officers are sworn law-enforcement officers who use a community-oriented policing philosophy to improve school safety and foster better relationships between law enforcement and youth.<sup>14</sup> They have a unique position in which they are “called upon to perform many duties not traditional to the law-enforcement function, such as instructing students, serving as mentors and assisting administrators in maintaining decorum and enforcing school board policy and rules.”<sup>15</sup> SRO programs emphasize the importance of collaboration between school officials and local law enforcement by promoting a community-based approach to school violence. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) has divided the responsibilities of SROs into three areas, referred to as the “triad” concept of school-based policing: (1) educator, (2) informal counselor and (3) law-enforcement officer.<sup>16</sup> In addition to their training as law-enforcement officers, each SRO receives specialized training in teaching and counseling.<sup>17</sup>

The benefits of SROs go beyond increasing campus safety. Several communities have reported that placing SROs at schools has reduced the burden on patrol officers and road deputies who no longer need to respond to individual problems at local schools.<sup>18</sup> They have also helped improve the image of police officers among youth and fostered better relationships between juveniles and police.<sup>19</sup> This is all in addition to enhancing school safety by protecting students, teachers and administrators.

The past two decades have witnessed a drop in incidences of school violence, including homicide rates<sup>20</sup> and violent crime.<sup>21</sup> This positive trend mirrors the expansion of SRO programs around the country: As more SRO officers have been assigned to schools, school death rates have decreased.<sup>22</sup> These numbers support the notion that the presence of armed officers positively impacts the school environment. Despite this

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<sup>14</sup> NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS, TO PROTECT & EDUCATE: THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER AND THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS 1 (Oct. 2012), (hereinafter NASRO SRO REPORT), *available at*:

[http://www.nasro.org/sites/default/files/pdf\\_files/NASRO\\_Protect\\_and\\_Educate.pdf](http://www.nasro.org/sites/default/files/pdf_files/NASRO_Protect_and_Educate.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> C.M.M. v. State, 983 So. 2d 704 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 5th Dist. 2008).

<sup>16</sup> NASRO SRO REPORT, *supra* note 14, at 3.

<sup>17</sup> NASRO responds to NRA recommendations, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCE OFFICERS (Dec. 21, 2012),

<http://www.nasro.org/content/nasro-responds-nra>.

<sup>18</sup> PETER FINN, MEG TOWNSEND, MICHAEL SHIVELY, & TOM RICH, A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING, MAINTAINING, AND SUCCEEDING WITH YOUR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM 210 (June 2005), (hereinafter SRO PROGRAM GUIDE), *available at*

[http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/ric/CDROMs/SchoolSafety/Law\\_Enforcement/AGuidetoDevelopingMaintainingSucceeding.p](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/ric/CDROMs/SchoolSafety/Law_Enforcement/AGuidetoDevelopingMaintainingSucceeding.pdf)

[df](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/ric/CDROMs/SchoolSafety/Law_Enforcement/AGuidetoDevelopingMaintainingSucceeding.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 212.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Dorn, *Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting in Newtown, CT – Initial Thoughts*, SAFE HAVENS INTERNATIONAL (Dec. 15, 2012), <http://www.safehavensinternational.org/sandy-hook-elementary-shooting-newtown-ct/>.

<sup>21</sup> Jon Anderson, *Violent crime in schools actually dropped 74 percent from 1992 to 2010, Hoover police Chief Nick Derzis says* (updated), ALABAMA LIVE (Jan. 31, 2013, 1:49 PM), [http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2013/01/crime\\_in\\_schools\\_actually\\_drop.html](http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2013/01/crime_in_schools_actually_drop.html).

<sup>22</sup> NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS, TO PROTECT & EDUCATE: THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER AND THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS 9 (Oct. 2012), *available at*:

[http://www.nasro.org/sites/default/files/pdf\\_files/NASRO\\_Protect\\_and\\_Educate.pdf](http://www.nasro.org/sites/default/files/pdf_files/NASRO_Protect_and_Educate.pdf).



upward trend, active shooter situations and other school attacks remain a grave concern for the nation.<sup>23</sup>

## FUNDING SOURCES

Over the years, there have been a variety of responses to school violence. In 1994, President Clinton announced the creation of the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). The \$60 million grant program was intended to provide communities with the resources necessary to tackle crime and violence in schools.<sup>24</sup> Following a wave of school shootings in the late 1990s, which included the Columbine massacre, COPS introduced a new program, called COPS in Schools (CIS), which awarded funding grants for schools to hire specially trained community officers.<sup>25</sup> Launched in 1999, CIS has provided for more than 6,500 SROs around the country.<sup>26</sup> Before funding for the program was cut in FY2006, it appeared to have a positive impact on the school environment. For example, students, faculty, and staff reported feeling safer with the presence of SROs on school grounds.<sup>27</sup> Even in situations where the community was initially reluctant to have police officers on campus, many school administrators and parents were pleased with their SRO programs.<sup>28</sup>

The purpose of CIS grants is to help schools initiate the SRO program, and thus they are only available for the initial three years, at which point schools become responsible for finding their own funding.<sup>29</sup> In some instances, when the CIS grants expired, the police department absorbed the entire cost of the program.<sup>30</sup> Although federal funds used to be the major source of program support in King County, WA, it no longer receives any federal funding.<sup>31</sup> Rather, the city and school district work together to pay the sheriff's office for each full-time SRO.<sup>32</sup>

Many schools have maintained their SRO programs by finding alternative funding sources, including state appropriations and local aid.<sup>33</sup> The majority of programs across the nation are funded by two or more sources.<sup>34</sup> The cost of these programs varies greatly depending on a myriad of factors, including location. For example, the

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<sup>23</sup> See Dorn, *supra* note 20.

<sup>24</sup> Eliana Johnson, *Cops in School*, NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE (Dec. 31, 2012, 4:00PM), <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/336637/cops-schools-eliana-johnson>.

<sup>25</sup> *COPS in Schools (CIS)*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?Item=54> (last visited March 25, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> See *id.*

<sup>27</sup> PETER FINN & JACK McDEVITT, NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAMS FINAL PROJECT REPORT 19 (Feb. 28, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Raymond, *Assigning Police Officers to Schools*, in PROBLEM-ORIENTED GUIDES FOR POLICE, RESPONSE GUIDES SERIES NO. 10 (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, Inc., 2010).

<sup>29</sup> See SRO PROGRAM GUIDE, *supra* note 18, at 192.

<sup>30</sup> See *id.* at 210.

<sup>31</sup> See *id.* at 194. Similarly, the SRO program in the Virginia Beach Police Department was originally funded one hundred percent from grants, which it no longer receives. As a result of the popularity of the program, the police chief and school superintendent were able to convince the city council to fund the entire program once the grants ceased. *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> See *id.* (noting that they are only required to pay about one-third of the total cost of each SRO).

<sup>33</sup> See *id.* at 191-202.

<sup>34</sup> See *id.* at 191.

Terrebone Parish in Louisiana receives \$280,000 to support nine SROs, while the program budget in Fontana, CA, is \$969,000 for only eight SROs.<sup>35</sup> In the event that federal grants are not available, many communities have looked for creative ways to support their SRO programs, including through private corporations or charities.<sup>36</sup> Some police departments have even held fundraisers in an attempt to raise money.<sup>37</sup>

Most often, the cost is shared between the law-enforcement agency and the school district.<sup>38</sup> At the Murrieta Valley High School in San Diego, the police department and the school district jointly fund the SRO program, with the former picking up a majority of the costs.<sup>39</sup> In Virginia, the School Resource Officer Program is generally subsidized by two sources: the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program (JAG), the leading source of federal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions,<sup>40</sup> and the SRO Incentive Grants Fund, which comes from the state.<sup>41</sup> In addition, school communities may also seek funding from private sources.<sup>42</sup>

Some communities face grave challenges in trying to maintain their program. Schools in Indiana are requesting an expansion of the current SRO program, but lawmakers have not yet identified funding for the additional personnel.<sup>43</sup> One piece of legislation proposes creating a fund to give matching grants of up to \$50,000 to districts to help pay for the officers.<sup>44</sup> Knox County Schools in Tennessee have just requested an additional \$1.9 million from the County Commission to fund 58 new SROs.<sup>45</sup>

## OTHER FEDERALLY FUNDED SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS UNDER COPS

For several years after CIS funding ceased, COPS continued to fund other school safety initiatives. In 2005, \$14.7 million was granted to 187 local law-enforcement agencies through the Secure Our Schools program (SOS),<sup>46</sup> which helps law-enforcement agencies collaborate with schools in purchasing crime-prevention equipment and conducting staff and student training. COPS awarded \$14.8 million in both 2006 and 2007 to fund 174 and 152, respectively, local law-enforcement agency efforts towards

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<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 192.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 201-4 (citing examples of funds coming from organizations like United Way and the American Legion, and from private companies, such as Microsoft, Toyota Motor Sports, and the Auto Club).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* at 201, 205 (citing examples of hosting golf tournaments and a Kiwanis fundraiser).

<sup>38</sup> *See id.* at 192.

<sup>39</sup> Tom Sheridan, *School resource officers are no 'Kindergarten Cops'*, U.T. SAN DIEGO (Feb. 11, 2013), <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/feb/11/school-resource-officers-murrieta/>.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program Fact Sheet, BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE, [https://www.bja.gov/Publications/JAG\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://www.bja.gov/Publications/JAG_Fact_Sheet.pdf) (last visited Mar. 29, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Virginia School Resource Officer (SRO) Program, VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES, <http://www.dcj.virginia.gov/vcss/sro.cfm> (last visited Mar. 29, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> SRO PROGRAM GUIDE, *supra* note 18, at 204 (including major donors such as Microsoft, Toyota Motor Sports, and the Auto Club).

<sup>43</sup> Chris Proffitt, *Lawmakers consider bill that would help fund school resource officers, other safety measures*, THE INDY CHANNEL (Mar. 8, 2013), <http://www.theindychannel.com/news/local-news/lawmakers-consider-bill-that-would-help-fund-school-resource-officers-other-safety-measures>.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> Lydia X. McCoy, *Knox Schools to seek additional funding for 58 school resource officers*, KNOX NEWS (Mar. 6, 2013 at 10:37PM), <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2013/mar/06/knox-schools-to-seek-additional-funding-for-58/>.

<sup>46</sup> COPS HISTORY (1994 – THE PRESENT), COPS: COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES, <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?item=44> (last visited Mar. 29, 2013).

enhancing school safety.<sup>47</sup> Another program made possible by COPS funding is Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS). Under the SS/HS program, the Departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services work together to promote a comprehensive healthy childhood development by emphasizing the relationship between prevention activities and community-based services, such as mental health and law enforcement. The SS/HS program received a grant of \$10 million from COPS to hire approximately 100 SROs.

It should be noted that because of federal budget constraints and shifting priorities, key school safety programs have declined in funding or have been terminated completely. The SOS program and the School Safety Initiative (SSI), which have been primarily funded by congressional earmarks for the last decade, have not received funding in the past few years. The SOS program, which provided more than \$110 million between 2002 and 2011, ended in 2012.<sup>48</sup> The School Safety Initiative, which gave state and local agencies more than \$53 million in grants between 1998 and 2010 for delinquency prevention, community planning and development, and school safety resources, ended in 2011.

Other sources of federal funding outside the COPS program include the U.S. Department of Education Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program,<sup>49</sup> the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Program,<sup>50</sup> and the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants.<sup>51</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As a result of funding challenges, many schools have been unable to afford employing a single SRO, and even schools that have SROs are lacking the institutional knowledge of how to incorporate these officers into a more comprehensive safety plan. Without proper guidance, including adequate training and best practices guidelines, schools remain vulnerable to incidents of school violence. In a 2004 survey, school resource officers reported significant gaps in their schools' security, that the school crisis plans were inadequate, and that the plans were not tested on a regular basis.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> John Solomon & Kimberly Dvorak, *Before Connecticut tragedy, administration eliminated emergency preparedness program, let school violence prevention programs lapse*, WASHINGTON GUARDIAN (Jan. 2, 2013). In FY 2011, SOS grant funding provided more than \$13 million to law enforcement agencies to assist schools with school safety and security concerns. *COPS Fact Sheet: Secure Our Schools*, COPS: COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES, <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2011AwardDocs/CSPP-SOS-CHP/2011-SOS-Post-FactSheet.pdf> (last visited Mar. 29, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> SRO PROGRAM GUIDE, *supra* note 18, at 200.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.* (coming from the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the U.S. Department of Justice).

<sup>51</sup> *Id.* (coming from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention).

<sup>52</sup> KENNETH TRUMP, 2004 NATIONAL SCHOOL-BASED LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEY: SCHOOL SAFETY LEFT BEHIND? SCHOOL SAFETY THREATS GROW AS PREPAREDNESS STALLS & FUNDING DECREASES 5 (2005), National School Safety and Security Services, [available at http://www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/nasro\\_survey\\_2002.html](http://www.schoolsecurity.org/resources/nasro_survey_2002.html).

# FINDINGS OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL SHIELD TASK FORCE

**Finding No. 1:** There has been insufficient attention paid to school security needs in our nation, and the greatest security gap falls within the medium- to smaller-size schools, which do not have the level of resources of the larger school districts.

*Comment:* A study of Virginia schools found that the elimination of SRO positions over a two-year period occurred mainly in the smaller schools, and was most likely due to reductions in federal and state grants for SRO programs.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, another gap identified by the assessment teams sent out by the National School Shield Task Force is that older schools, constructed more than ten years ago, have greater security challenges than newer facilities. More recently designed schools have more architectural attention devoted to security features in contrast to the building design and layout of older facilities.

Prior to the Sandy Hook incident, most schools took the view that “it probably won’t happen here.” Sandy Hook school leadership has since realized the vulnerability of an unprotected school and the need to take action.

**Finding No. 2:** Many schools do not have a formal, written security plan, and even for those that do, they are often either inadequate or not properly exercised. Schools across the nation vary greatly based on size, geography, student composition, building design, threats and a variety of other factors, all of which dictate the need for individualized and tailor-made security plans adapted to the uniqueness of the particular school.

*Comment:* The plan should be an all-hazards approach that is uniquely designed for the individual campus. The plan should set forth layers of security including use of technology, perimeter security, staff training, properly conducted security drills, and coordination with local law enforcement, fire service and emergency responders.

**Finding No. 3:** A properly trained armed school officer, such as a school resource officer, has proven to be an important layer of security for prevention and response in the case of an active threat on a school campus.

*Comment:* A study of SROs in Virginia found that they have become “an important feature of local law enforcement and public schools.”<sup>54</sup> The success of any law-enforcement presence and its deterrent value is always difficult to measure, but the

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<sup>53</sup> JOHN G. SCHUITEMAN, THE STATUS OF VIRGINIA SROs: 2007, at 2 (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Apr. 6, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> *Id.* at 8.

assessments to date lead to the conclusion that a properly trained SRO is an important part of the security efforts of any school.

**Finding No. 4:** Local school authorities are in the best position to make a final decision on school safety procedures, specifically whether an armed security guard is necessary and supported by the education and citizen community.

**Finding No. 5:** Many public and non-public schools are financially unable to include armed security personnel as part of the school security plan and have resorted to school staff carrying firearms in order to provide an additional level of protection for the students and staff in the event of a violent incident on school property.

*Comment:* The school staff generally receives authorization from law enforcement as a reserve deputy or authorized security officer, even though the training required is inconsistent and often inadequate. Currently, there is no nationally recognized training program for the safe and effective carry, storage, maintenance and administration of firearms by school employees.

For example, in February, after the Sandy Hook tragedy, the Van, TX, school board, which serves more than 2,000 students, voted to allow guns on campus. This action authorized certain school employees to carry firearms on school property, at school events and at board meetings.<sup>55</sup>

**Finding No. 6:** While the local school leadership should make all final decisions regarding the elements of the school security plan, the individual states, with few exceptions, have not made school security an element of adequacy in school standards.

*Comment:* Every school is unique, and there is not a single security plan that covers all schools. A school security plan must be locally tailored to be effective, reliable and safe. What is essential is that every school conducts its own security assessment and develops a plan that covers the vulnerabilities determined in the assessment. States should set the requirements for security and risk assessment and the development of an adequate all-hazards security plan for the school.

**Finding No. 7:** School officials are not generally trained in security assessments or the development of comprehensive safety and security plans. Ideally, a school retains professional assistance in developing their school security plans; however, there is a compelling need for professional-quality online self-assessment tools. This need was emphasized in a recent statement before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce: “While there is certainly some information on websites and in other literature, and products do exist and are on the market to secure our nation’s schools,

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<sup>55</sup> Molly Hennessy-Fiske, *Texas school staffer shot during gun class*, LA Times (Feb. 28, 2013), <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/feb/28/nation/la-na-nn-texas-school-worker-shot-20130228>.

we have not been able to find in our research a website or other single source of information that comprehensively integrates all of the security needs together.”<sup>56</sup>

*Comment:* A professional security consultant generally costs \$10,000 per school campus. An online self-assessment tool will make the work of the security consultant more cost effective, and it will assist the school officials in knowing what security enhancements are needed.

**Finding No. 8:** Federal funding for the personnel costs of SROs has served as a pathway for increased security in our schools, but federal funding has proved unreliable as a long-term solution to the school safety and security needs of our nation.

*Comment:* Many states, including Connecticut<sup>57</sup> and Wyoming<sup>58</sup>, have been forced to shut down or reduce their SRO programs after federal budget cuts, yet remain actively searching for alternative funding options so they can bring SROs back to schools.

**Finding No. 9:** There are numerous federal agencies and programs that provide valuable school safety resources; however, there is a lack of coordination between the federal agencies resulting in gaps, duplication and inefficiencies.

*Comment:* There are at least three different Cabinet-level departments that have some involvement in school safety policy, funding or initiatives. The Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Education all have programs focusing on school safety. Within each department there are multiple sub-agencies that are working (sometimes independently of each other) on school safety programs.

**Finding No. 10:** History teaches us that in most violent attacks at a school, there are multiple early warning signs, called pre-incident indicators, of a student or outside person who exhibits threatening behavior and poses a risk to the school.<sup>59</sup> In order to properly use these indicators to minimize the risk of violence, schools must develop a culture of awareness and willingness to share this information with the proper

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<sup>56</sup> *Protecting Students and Teachers: A Discussion on School Safety: Hearings Before the House Comm. on Education and the Workforce*, 113<sup>th</sup> Cong. (Feb. 27, 2013) (testimony of Brett Bontrager, Senior Vice President and Group Executive, Stanley Black & Decker), available at: [http://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bontrager\\_testimony.pdf](http://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bontrager_testimony.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Dave Altamari, *State Troopers May Be Put Back In Schools*, THE HARTFORD COURANT (Jan. 22, 2013), [http://articles.courant.com/2013-01-22/news/hc-newtown-school-resource-officers-20130119\\_1\\_school-resource-officers-thomas-davoren-state-troopers](http://articles.courant.com/2013-01-22/news/hc-newtown-school-resource-officers-20130119_1_school-resource-officers-thomas-davoren-state-troopers).

<sup>58</sup> Elysia Conner, *Wyoming officials look for ways to improve school safety*, BILLINGS GAZETTE (Mar. 17, 2013, at 11:45PM), [http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/wyoming-officials-look-for-ways-to-improve-school-safety/article\\_63037732-ec2c-5048-8c0d-b4d6b0e4bcb4.html](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/wyoming-officials-look-for-ways-to-improve-school-safety/article_63037732-ec2c-5048-8c0d-b4d6b0e4bcb4.html).

<sup>59</sup> The FBI and Secret Service found that in many instances of school violence, the perpetrator indicated their intentions to peers prior to the attack. Dewey G. Cornell, *The Virginia Model for Student Threat Assessment 3*, CONFRONTING VIOLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS: PLANNING, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY – A PERI SYMPOSIUM, available at: <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/violence/virginia-model.pdf>. Mitchell Johnson, of Westside Middle School, Arkansas, told his friends he would be "running from the cops," foreshadowing his intentions, but students who heard him didn't know how to interpret his comments. Katherine Newman, *In school shootings, patterns and warning signs*, CNN.COM (Dec. 17, 2012, at 11:35AM), <http://www.cnn.com/2012/12/17/opinion/newman-school-shooters>. After Michael Carneal of Heath High School, Kentucky, shot three students, his peers later recalled his "jokes" about taking over the school, and had actually seen him bring guns to school - but nobody knew how to respond or what to do with these warnings. Karen Samples Gutierrez, *Michael Corneal: Torment of a Teen Killer*, CINCINNATI.COM (Sep. 14, 2002), [http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2002/09/14/loc\\_gutierrez\\_michael.html](http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2002/09/14/loc_gutierrez_michael.html).



individuals. A positive school culture has also been linked to reducing incidences of bullying, which is frequently associated with an attackers' decision to engage in a violent act. The *Best Practices Guidelines*, in Appendix A (pp. 9-22), contains additional information on school climate and the relationship to school violence.

The most widespread and effective tool that has been used to identify pre-incident indicators and other indicators of school dynamics is the use of Threat Assessment Groups or Behavioral Intervention Teams (BIT). These teams are trained to identify individuals who may pose a risk to society, and assist in the development of an individualized plan of mental health and educational services. The *Best Practices Guidelines*, in Appendix A (pp. 16-20), has more information on pre-incident indicators for adults and students.

*Comment:* The impact of threat assessment teams is demonstrated in a 2011 survey of Virginia school safety. The schools that used the threat assessment guidelines developed by the University of Virginia reported lower rates of weapons-related disciplinary infractions and lower rates of school suspensions.<sup>60</sup> The students in these schools experienced less bullying, were more likely to seek help for bullying and threats of violence, and had more positive perceptions of school climate.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Dewey Cornell, Peter J. Lovegrove, Donna Michaelis, & Sherri Johnson, *The 2011 Virginia School Safety Audit Survey Results*, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (June 2011).

<sup>61</sup> See *id.* at 9.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been provided to the NRA as it considers its future commitment to the mission of school security and safety. Some of the recommendations also apply to federal and state policy makers, and it is our intent that the recommendations will add to the national discussion and be part of the solutions to the common goal of protecting our children.

**No. 1: Training** A model-training program has been developed by the NSS Task Force for the professional training of armed personnel in the school environment. Appendix D is the public version of the training outline for law-enforcement school resource officers, and Appendix E is the public version of the training outline for armed school personnel. This training will only be open to those who are designated by school officials and qualified by appropriate background investigation, testing and relevant experience.

The National School Shield initiative should adopt this model-training program for armed officers or personnel in the schools as a best practice. The NRA has the nationally recognized expertise to develop and implement the stringent training courses required by this model program. It is recommended that the professional training programs that are approved by the states for armed school personnel use private sector approved and certified trainers as well as traditional state law enforcement trainers. Appendix C is the public version of the Train the Trainer Program.

**No. 2: Adoption of Model Law for Armed School Personnel** Many states prohibit anyone other than a sworn law-enforcement officer or licensed security guard to carry a firearm in a public or non-public school. In order for a selected school staff member to be designated, trained and armed on school property, the states will have to change current legal restrictions.

Attached, as Appendix H, is a model state law that is presented for that purpose.

**No. 3: School Resource Officer** Each school that employs an SRO should have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or an “interagency agreement,” between the appropriate law-enforcement agency and the school district. This contract should define the duties and responsibilities of the SRO, as well as the applicable laws, rules and regulations.

The objective of the SRO is not to increase juvenile arrests within a school, but to provide security and to support the normal disciplinary policies of a school consistent with the MOU.

**No. 4: Online Self-Assessment Tool** An internet-based self-assessment tool has been created to allow any school (whether public, private or parochial) to have secure access to comprehensively evaluate and assess the security gaps and vulnerabilities of each school.

Appendix G is the general description of this online self-assessment security tool.

The National School Shield initiative should pilot this self-assessment tool in three school districts of different sizes in order to perfect the questions and scoring. After the pilot projects are completed, this assessment tool should be deployed in a secure fashion on the NSS website for free access by all schools who obtain authorization codes.

This self-assessment tool is based on research-backed concepts and is guided by the unique characteristics of the individual school. The scenario-based questions prompt schools to identify the operational and functional weaknesses in their security and assist them in finding solutions to fill the gaps. The outcome-based performance standards ensure that the assessment is applicable to the unique characteristics of any given school.

**No. 5: State Education Adequacy Requirement** State standards related to school security vary from non-existent to stringent. Although state responses to school security will naturally vary, there should be a common element that requires all public schools to participate in an assessment and develop a security plan based on the unique requirements of that particular institution.

**No. 6: Federal Coordination and Funding** Either through legislation or executive action, a lead agency should be designated to coordinate the federal programs and funding of local school safety efforts. The Department of Homeland Security should be designated as the lead, supported by the Department of Education and Department of Justice.

In terms of funding, the historic model of COPS program grants and modest grants through other programs is neither consistent nor adequate to provide armed officers in our nation's schools and to fund other security-related improvements desperately needed in our schools. While the focus of this report is to create a means of private-sector support for school safety, we note that there are numerous grant programs that are not available to schools.

It is recommended that the Department of Homeland Security grants should be open for school security programs such as training, risk assessment and security response planning. This would not involve any additional federal funds, but would open up schools as a potential recipient of the Homeland Security grants.

**No. 7: Umbrella National Organization to Advocate and Support School Safety** Because of the limitations of federal, state and local funding for school safety, there is an

important role that can be filled by a private non-profit advocacy and education organization. The National School Shield is in a position with adequate funding and support from the NRA to fulfill this important national mission.

The NSS mission would: (a) provide national advocacy for school safety; (b) supply ongoing online self-assessment and other tools for public, private and parochial schools; (c) make available best practices in school safety to help guide schools in the development of school safety and security policies; (d) fund innovative pilot projects and training costs for armed school personnel; and (e) provide state-of-the-art training programs in the area of school safety and security.

It is recommended that an advisory board be created to provide counsel on the development of the NSS initiative and to assist in the securing of adequate funding for the programs.

While every school should have free access to the online resources of the NSS, it is recommended that before a school can be certified as a member of NSS, it must meet a set of strict criteria. Membership requirements would include:

- (a) Completion of online security assessment of school, supplemented as needed by on-site technical assistance
- (b) Development of comprehensive all-hazards school security plan based upon the assessment
- (c) Coordination and training with local law enforcement and first responders
- (d) Presence in the school of a trained armed law-enforcement officer, security officer or trained armed school staff
- (e) Periodic reviews of school security program utilizing available technical assistance to ensure consistency with best practices

We further recommend that NSS fund and assign technical consultations for member schools. This could be in the form of a help desk or on-site visits.

Finally, we recommend that the NSS explore insurance coverage for member schools as a potential program benefit.

#### **No. 8: Specific Pilot Program on Threat Assessments and Mental Health.**

As part of its comprehensive security plan, each school should develop a threat assessment team, which will work in coordination with mental health professionals. The purpose is to create a positive school environment that encourages sharing information on early warning signs and reducing incidences of bullying or other anti-social behavior. The team should coordinate with any current crisis response protocols, and should be responsible for assessing the emotional climate of the school by reviewing all relevant policies, rules and regulations that affect the educational environment. The *Best Practices Guidelines*, Appendix A (pp. 15-22), contains additional information on the duties of the threat assessment team.

The team will be responsible for evaluating all threats, including the surrounding circumstances, and conducting an investigation to determine whether the threat is serious. After all appropriate assessments have been made, the team should create a written safety plan by integrating all relevant findings, and should determine whether to refer the student to a school psychologist for a mental health assessment and, if necessary, to the school resource officer for a law-enforcement investigation.

Appendix A details how the teams should conduct their assessments, which individuals should be included on the team and other relevant information.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the NSS initiate a partnership with other interested national partners to develop and fund three pilot projects in order to establish best practices and a model for school threat assessment, prevention and mental health support.

In developing these pilot projects, reference should be made to the College and University Behavioral Intervention Team (CUBIT),<sup>62</sup> which is a model developed by the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management in response to the surge of school violence and shootings in 2007, and to the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA). The NRA should also look at the *Virginia Model for Student Threat Assessment*, which was drafted based on the findings of a series of field tests on threat assessment guidelines. An active program that should be considered is the Safe and Respectful School Program of the Threat Assessment Group (TAG), which has been available as a resource since 2011 in the state of Tennessee.

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<sup>62</sup> Brett A. Sokolow & Stephanie F. Hughes, *Risk Mitigation Through the NCHERM Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment Model 1*, NATIONAL CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION RISK MANAGEMENT, available at: <http://ncherp.org/pdfs/2008-whitepaper.pdf>. This model was developed in direct response to the Virginia Governor's Report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel and other national panel and review recommendations. The CUBIT is unique in that it includes a formalized protocol of engagement techniques and strategies, a clear process for threat collection and assessment, and a procedure for communication. In addition, it was specifically designed to integrate with all other campus risk management practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

The work of the National School Shield has only just begun. The NSS Task Force has done its work by providing best practices in school security, new tools for security assessments, recommendations for funding and a private sector program model. It is our hope that the NRA looks favorably on these recommendations, commits its enormous political will and energy behind this effort, and devotes sufficient resources to properly fund the program, pilots and continued support for school safety.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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